The Inquirer

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RESOLUTION FOUR!

RESOLUTIONS on public matters at the Annual meetings of the General Assembly of Unitarian and Free Christian Churches, usually present certain problems of debate, either through lack of time, or frequently because of the kind of resolution submitted. One of the reasons perhaps for the continuous argument about whether these resolutions should be submitted or not (raised again this year) is the air of futility that frequently accompanies them. An attempt is to be made this year to overcome these difficulties. One evening is to be given to debate, and presumably decisions, upon certain public questions. They will be found with explanations elsewhere in this issue. Four are to be submitted by different sponsors, and twenty-five minutes are to be allotted to the debate of each.

The first three may be described as token resolutions. An annual meeting of the General Assembly is unlikely to disagree much about anti-semitism and the colour bar, or about talking over with responsible persons the curriculum of the colleges, or about the means to control population growth and to help under-developed countries.

Fifteen Minutes

But resolution four is a different matter. It dissents by implication, and with the use of strongly invocative language, from the policy of the government and the opposition upon nuclear disarmament. It must be assumed that there are a large number of Unitarians who within all the puzzles of nuclear disarmament reluctantly support the reluctant policy of the government and opposition. Their point of view may be expressed either by amendment or dissent in the fifteen minutes left over for debate after the resolution has been moved—provided, too, they have not spoken during the evening. If there should be more than one amendment the debate would be farcical.

If it were merely the discussion of a token resolution there need be no complaint. After all, public questions are under continuous discussion among Unitarians throughout the year and their crystallisation in resolutions at the annual meetings is reasonable. But there is not the slightest evidence to suggest that the Unitarians are united upon the wording and substance of resolution four. With this known division, fifteen minutes allowed for dissent or debate, is futility. And it is this kind of thing which causes repugnance about serious public matters being discussed at the Assembly meetings.

Those Who Dissent

The resolution is foolishly loaded. It supports the policy recommended by calling upon "the will of God . . . the spirit of Jesus, and . . . the concord of men". There are Unitarians who dissent from the proposed policy. It must be surmised that the sponsors do not mean what they say. It is unlikely that they would worship week by week with friends who they believe flout "the will of God . . . the spirit of Jesus . . . and the concord of men". (And if anyone should vote against the resolution presumably they would be doing this thing). Language of this sort, not used in any of the other resolutions, not really meant, loads the emotional dice in favour of a policy that ought to explain itself. It is the kind of emotional provincialism that, launched upon "Her Majesty's Government", is not likely to cause a stir.

The arguments against the policy are well known and they are serious. If the language of the resolution were carried out it would mean the departure of the American forces from this country. It would destroy the American alliance. In the known state of American public opinion this would not decrease but increase the preparation for nuclear war. The destruction of the American alliance, besides having serious repercussions in the Commonwealth, would mean the destruction of Nato. This in turn would destroy what there is at present of an international order, based upon the balance between West and East.

Emotional Dogmatism

One of the results of this—in addition to the appalling international chaos that would follow—would be the immediate break-up of the disarmament conference in Geneva. This rests upon mutual agreement in the West. The one hope at the moment for universal disarmament lies in this conference. Apart from this, for nearly two years, scientists from the interested countries have been working in Geneva to devise a scheme for the international control of nuclear weapons and their eventual abolition. They are within an ace of agreement. The disarmament conference stands likely to make use of it. For the first time there is real hope for the control and abolition of nuclear weapons. The resolution calling upon "the will of God . . . the spirit of Jesus . . . and the concord of men" would destroy all this by its emotional dogmatism.

It would be a sorry day for the Unitarian churches if resolutions on public questions were ruled out of their

annual deliberations. But resolutions of this kind, to be discussed in the manner proposed, cannot possibly give any confidence to many who wish these questions to be debated. The provincialism of the whole procedure, for which the resolution is responsible rather than anything else, is embarrassing.

HYPOCRISY, 1960

By A. Wilfred Adams

CONDITIONS in the social and religious setting in Palestine moved Jesus to his mission. His teaching has a bearing on comparably disturbing features in Western Civilization. Attention in what follows is focussed on one outstanding blot on Society against which he often preached, the divorce between precept and practice. Nowadays, utterances by responsible persons moralizing on life's affairs are conspicuously at variance with the relevant actions of the speakers. To expose the undermining influence of this dual standard on the body politic, examples are given headed by incisive words spoken by Jesus in the early "Thirties" A.D.

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1. "That widow cast in more than all for they cast in of their abundance but she of her want did cast in all that she had, even all her living". This he said after seeing contributions to the treasury from the rich and the two mites from the poor widow.

The Church honours the words "The greatest of these is charity", making altruism a cardinal virtue. What happens daily? Despite a Welfare State thousands of families in Britain are cramped by housing shortage and old folk have to bear defective, inadequate quarters and poverty. Further afield are millions of refugees living in misery, some lying in the streets like unwanted animals and close to death. In affluent England the money goes in the degrading worship of gross materialism, the shops overloaded with luxury commodities. Britain's contribution to U.N.A. this refugee year is a relative pittance.

2. The words "He laid his hands on every one of them and healed them" applied to a seven-day week. One or more stories of healing in nine out of sixteen chapters in Mark's and eleven out of twenty-four chapters in Luke's gospel, show how important was this part of Jesus' programme.

Despite exhortations by the Church over the centuries voluntary succour remained glaringly inadequate. Britain's conscience was roused during World War II, and the free health service for all was started (1948). This earned deep gratitude from the nation and the commendation of high authorities. But many grave defects stolidly persist. There are too few general practitioners, and a shortage of hospitals alongside long "waiting lists". Moreover, upgrading of existing premises is prevented by the age of buildings in which today's essentials of rapidly evolving improvements cannot be incorporated. Hardly a new hospital has been built since 1939.

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3. "A new commandment . . . love one another" sums up the basic ideal for social relations in the Gospel. Another version is the golden rule.

Current regard for the individual is expressed by the Church in the story of the creation of man who "was made in the image and likeness of God", in affirmations like "each human being is a unique personality" and the "dignity of man". But prevailing practice appears incompatible with these valuations. In and out of the Commonwealth, brutality blurs this image which is heeded and opposed in the name of progress. At home strikes prevail and death haunts the roads. The Government provides roads for still faster speeding. Pictures in the newspaper, "Daily Mirror" (26.1.60), showed eighty, "mainly young", people of the 745 killed in December last. Wounded in vastly greater numbers occupy space in hospitals deficient of beds.

In 1945 the wide-world trembled over Hiroshima. That is hushed now. Beside incessantly debating the ideal of nuclear disarmament, the East and West Countries proudly generate the machinery for the opposite purpose. Man has talked long and achieved somewhat of good since having a vision of a kingdom of heaven on earth; but how speedily man has completed the H-bomb to bring the Kingdom of hell on earth. And it is not long since the establishment enlisted Britons in a war that was to end war! Pride, and avarice prepare now intensively for the consummate tragedy in human history and just when, thanks to Science, noble spirits among mankind see the realisation of the abundant life becoming possible for all.

4. "How hardly shall they that have riches enter into the Kingdom of God".

This solemn warning against accumulative materialism is reinforced in the Gospel by a more constructive one "Where your treasure is there shall your heart be also". Events around us appear diametrically opposed to this teaching. The morning after the declaration of the last Budget there was an ugly scene at the Stock Exchange. Recent take-over bids show avaricious power at the helm of human destiny. Strikes are prevalent. Dives prosper notably by trading on human weaknesses and much sold is unnecessary and noxious. Much printing matter panders to sensual appetites which need refining to keep man on the path of evolution. Advertisements rival each other in appeals for sheer greed. Thus, though wages may rise they are at once sapped and, in the process, the blessings of a healthy body, culture of the mind, the arts and morale are impaired.

A LAYMAN'S DIARY

MARCH 13. (Sunday). In our relatively small congregation a christening is quite a rare event; in the whole of last year there was only one. This year, two babies have arrived already, and the first was christened by our minister after this morning's service. Marguerite Elaine was most self-possessed, and a slight vocal intervention was effectively soothed by the closing voluntary—played by her father, for she is our organist's daughter. The end of the morning service is surely the ideal time for a christening; it was doubly appropriate this time, as the members of the Sunday School had been conducting the service—a simple, dignified sequence of readings, hymns and prayers, on the theme "No man is an Island". We all sat in a wide circle in the middle of the church, with the children at the four compass points and the adults in between; it was an embracing circle, not an excluding one. Afterwards, David said, "I don't think I've ever seen anyone chrysalised before". "Except yourself", Jamie told him pedantically.

At the annual meeting of the congregation at night, we approved the Sundays School's request for a new name (Junior Church), revised the church rules (a perniciously but important business), and, with much regret, heard of the resignation of our minister, who is to move to a new charge in the summer. After a ministry of nearer ten years than five among us, in which he has built many strong foundations, he feels—I think reasonably—that he should now gain experience in a different field. His new church will be lucky, just as we have been lucky to have him for so long.

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March 15. Work took me today to Horsham: As I had an hour to spare, I looked in at the Free Christian Church (the Rev J. M. Hall), which I had not seen before. It is a most attractive building, outside and inside (1721), but what struck me above all was the neat and *cared-for* look of the church, the hall and the grounds. It was a look which could only be achieved by a congregation who loved their church and were prepared to work hard for it. I felt better for having been there.

At night, thanks to an *Inquirer* advertisement, I went to the Conway Memorial Lecture on "Youth in an Affluent Society", by Mrs. Mary Stocks. The Conway Hall was packed. In the chair, Mrs. R. W. Sorensen deputised splendidly for her husband, who had had to go with a Parliamentary delegation to

Vanmanda. She told us that he had considerately written out some notes of what she should say, but that she had thought it over and decided to compose her own remarks, "so I left his notes on his desk". (This was very well received!). Mrs. Stocks examined in detail the commercial interests which had sprung up to absorb the earnings of teen-agers, and were forcing them into an unsettled, materialistic existence for the few years beween leaving school and taking on family responsibilities. She confessed that she had no solution to offer; "in fact", she ended, "I hope the press won't print what I have said, and that you will go home and forget all about it!" I don't quite know the answer either; to tell the truth, I am by no means convinced that the "problem" is so grave as it is cracked up to be.

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March 16.—Details in the papers today of a Health Ministry document which explains the new terms which are now being used in official publications to describe various forms of mental disorder. As far back as 1930 we should have stopped talking about "lunatics" and "asylums": in 1960 we say goodbye to "mental hospital" (now to be "psychiatric hospital"), "mental defective", "idiot" and "imbecile". Let us hope that public opinion will soon absorb the new spirit of understanding which the changes are meant to symbolise.

I have been reading *La Fin des Asiles* (Farewell to the Asylum), by a French journalist, Hervé Bazin (Paris, Grasset, 1959); even to me, with my schoolboy French, it is a clear account of the progress which many countries in Europe, and not just ourselves, are making in the care and treatment of the mentally disordered.—On the question of classifying and naming the forms of illness, Bazin quotes a French psychiatrist as saying, "*Les classifications, c'est de la botanique. Ce qui compte, c'est le malade.*" How warmly I agree.

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March 17. *The Times* recently published eight factual articles by their special correspondent in South Africa, on the whole question of *apartheid*. These have now been printed in a booklet, *Anatomy of Apartheid*, 1960 (1/3d., post free, from *The Times* Special Publications Department, Printing House Square, London, E.C.4). Its 46 pages make impressive reading, and help one to meet the frequently expressed objection, "Who are *you* to criticise the South African Government? You don't live there, and you can't possibly know the real truth. If you did . . ." (and so on).

Incidentally, I wish people who deplore *apartheid* would take the trouble to pronounce it right. I don't know Afrikaans, but I am, I hope, observant enough to notice that people who know South Africa (like Trevor Huddleston) make the last syllable rhyme with "*aid*" or "*ate*", and not with "hide". If I hear someone decrying "apart-hide", I have a tiny suspicion that here is somebody who hasn't bothered to get his facts right, and may be simply fasten-on to the latest fashionable form of approved moral indignation. Supporters of that kind can do serious harm to the most genuine movement.

AN EXPERIMENT AT THE ASSEMBLY MEETINGS

ONE of the problems at the Annual Meetings is providing more time for the discussion of resolutions on matters of public concern. With a view to meeting this problem, at least in part, the Evening Meeting on Wednesday, April 20th will have before it four resolutions which will be moved and seconded and then thrown open to the meeting for discussion. As the time available is only two hours and time must be allowed for the singing of three hymns, the Chairman's remarks and the taking of the collection, only twenty-five minutes can be devoted to the consideration of each resolution. So in order to give as many people as possible the opportunity to take part no one will be allowed to speak to more than one resolution.

The resolutions to be considered are as follows:

Anti-Semitism and the Colour Bar

"That this General Assembly, etc., deeply regretting the re-appearance of anti-Semitism and all attempts to apply a colour bar, urges all churches to do all in their power to combat inter-racial hatred and to establish friendly links with Jewish and coloured people."

Mental Health

"That this Assembly, noting the growing realisation amongst some theologians and some medical men, that there is a relationship between the spiritual and moral issues of religion and the issues of mental health and disorder, urges that the Council of the General Assembly through the Standing Conference of the Colleges in consultation with experts, examine the question whether the pastoral role of the Ministry in modern times should include understanding of and work with cases of mental ill-health as a natural part of the "cure of souls" and whether training for this purpose should be included in the training of the Minister and what the nature of such training should be."

Population and the War on Want

"That this General Assembly, etc., mindful of the danger that rapid population increase may nullify attempts to alleviate poverty in many parts of the world, stresses the importance of the spread of knowledge of reliable methods of contraception, and urges H.M. Government and the U.N. to do all in their power to make available accurate information and cheap contraceptives in such areas.

Further this Assembly urges H.M. Government to make available either directly or through the United Nations much larger funds than at present to help reduce poverty in under-developed countries by other means, and especially by providing capital as an outright gift or as a free loan, by offering scientific and technical educational facilities to students, by sending out experts to advise local governments and train personnel, by providing money to support and rehabilitate refugee populations, and above all by much larger contributions to United Nations' agencies."

Nuclear Disarmament

"That this General Assembly, etc., believing that weapons of mass destruction are contrary to the will of God, a denial of the spirit of Jesus, and an obstacle to the concord of men, calls on H.M. Government to renounce the manufacture, use or threatened use of such weapons."

J.K.

COMMENTARY

The Unitarian Church

MANCHESTER College and Rev. Hilton Biehn of Bristol share between them the honours for organising what was voted the most stimulating and helpful ministers' course for a long time. It was the Ministers' Refresher Course held at the College this month on the subject of marriage guidance.

Mr. Biehn is a Marriage Guidance Counsellor. So is Rev. John Quick, of Gloucester and Cheltenham, who was also present. They, and Rev. Geoffrey Bush, a Congregationalist minister who is a Counsellor for the Oxford area, planned the talks. Mr. A. Peacock, a retired official from the National Assistance Board, discussed the local authority's interest in domestic problems.

There were a number of points of dispute, most of them profound, but they served only to deepen the profoundly theological character of the thinking brought to bear. There is little doubt that British Unitarianism is undergoing a theological revival. Even the term theology itself is no longer taboo as suggesting an arid intellectualising about unrealities. Theology is born in the tensions of intellect and spirit. Because it begins today with the dilemmas of man's existence rather than speculations about the universe, does not make it any the less theology.

At Oxford we began with marriage, sex, loyalty, bewilderment, character deficiencies, cruelty, hire-purchase, confidence, community, weeping, adolescence, children's officers. We found them tied up with covenants, prayer, forgiveness, meaning, Church, God.

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There was a feeling after a new and deeper unity there; it continued long after the formal lectures ended. There was a consciousness that the Unitarian movement is not a haphazard assembly of free individuals preaching private theologies; it is a Church. But it

is a Church not by virtue of obedience, but by virtue of freedom. If anything is sacramental in Unitarianism, it is freedom, since clearly this is conceived of as the Means of Grace.

At this meeting we realised anew that this freedom is infinitely more than intellectual liberty; it is bound up with integrity of spirit, honesty, realism, and what one man called "the primacy of prayer". Where this is deeply grasped there is no need of ecclesiastical authority to guarantee an artificial unity, for there is a real unity at the deepest levels of men's understanding: the unity of the Spirit of God.

It was significant that we reached this level by talking not about history nor yet about metaphysics, but about human love.

J. Allen Skinner

A man but recently released from prison is to be the speaker at the Unitarian Peace Fellowship's annual meeting at Essex Hall on Wednesday, April 20, at 5 p.m. He is Mr. J. Allen Skinner, associate editor of *Peace News*, who was one of the six people imprisoned just before last Christmas for his part in the management of the Direct Action Committee against Nuclear War. The Committee staged a demonstration against the Harrington missile site shortly after the arrest of the six. Allen Skinner was imprisoned, with his colleagues, for publishing leaflets calling for support for the demonstration.

Now in his late sixties, Allen Skinner was an early war resister. He joined Fenner Brockway's No Conscription Fellowship founded during the First World War and went to prison as a C.O. The appalling conditions of those early years led to a bone infection which has left him with a gammy leg.

There followed a period of work for the Union of Post Office Workers including the editorship of the Union's magazine, and a long bout of public speaking and theorising with the Independent Labour Party. Skinner has one of those unmuddled intellects which enable him to go straight to the theoretical heart of any social or political event.

After the Second World War he held senior office in the Common Wealth Party from which Sir Richard Acland, its founder, had by then withdrawn. Here he set to work to find political equivalents for the rich ethical values he holds. He became editor of *Peace News* for the same reason.

I have never heard anyone put the fundamental human issues raised by the presence and menace of H-bombs more poignantly than Allen Skinner. He steadily resists any attempt to label him as a religious man. Those who hear him during G.A. week can decide for themselves.

The ethics of birth-control

I have been following an interesting correspondence in *The New Statesman* on birth-control.

It seems to have been entirely between a Jesuit priest Fr. R. H. Eastwell, and a variety of opponents, but not including to my knowledge, one Protestant clergyman.

This was unfortunate, since the Catholic's arguments were all essentially theological and his correspondents insisted, with odd exceptions, on attacking him on entirely other grounds.

This whole question is bound shortly to loom into public prominence once more when the results of the trials with the contraceptive pill are published. Oral contraceptives have been known experimentally for some years, but were found to have side-effects which militated against their public trial. Apparently these side-effects have now been overcome.

It is here that it appears the crux of the discussion lies, not in the argument against interference with the "laws of God". Man manipulates and frustrates the "laws of God" every time he cuts his hair, takes an anti-biotic, flies in an aeroplane or undergoes an operation. To think of natural law in a static sense is to remain bound to the pre-scientific understanding of nature (which is largely where the Roman Catholic Church is).

The modern conception of nature or law (though perhaps not so modern after all) is of a dynamic, interacting process; more a system of relationships than a pattern of fixed determinants. In this nexus man must work out his attitudes and define his ethics. It is the eternal Protestant's responsibility.

At the heart of the birth-control debate, like the A.I.D. controversy, is not a medical, nor a social, but an ethical issue; and behind every ethical problem there is a theological one. The Catholics have an impressive quality about their arguments in this field because they continue to insist on seeing the problem in fundamental theological terms. Fr. Eastwell says with a brave flourish (though oddly *démodé*), "Contraception is just as much against the law of God as murder, unjust war, unjust social conditions, oppression, racial discrimination, callousness to refugees—or sponsoring sexy advertisements, films or books. The church did not make these laws, she only has the commission to teach and interpret them, not to change them".

One lay (presumably Anglican) correspondent, raises the question whether the purpose of marriage is primarily procreation as The Book of Common Prayer asserts, since for two thirds of the time available for physical union reproduction is impossible. Sexual pleasure would therefore seem to have a value in itself in deepening the relationship and enriching the personalities of the two people involved, apart from the production of children.

T.W.

NEWS AND NOTES

By A. R. Dowsing

THE Rev. Phillip Hewett, one of our most popular contributors and our minister in Vancouver B.C., has sent me a very interesting note on "The Origin of the Flaming Chalice" taken from the "Ottawa Unitarian". It is well worth reproducing for general information. Here it is:

> The seal symbolising the spirit and work of the Unitarian Service Committee, the Flaming Chalice, is today known on five continents and in 29 different countries where U.S.C. representatives have served. It is now widely used as a convenient symbol of the faith, as on our masthead. The seal itself was adopted by the Committee in 1941 and its origin is an interesting story.
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> Hans Deutsch was an Austrian refugee who lived in Paris until France was invaded in 1940. He had worked in many European countries as a musician, a draftsman and portraitist. Having contributed many (anti-Hitler) cartoons . . . . . to several papers in Vienna, he fled Paris and finally settled in Portugal . . . .
>
> It was in Portugal that Hans Deutsch joined the staff of the U.S.C. for six months as secretary and assistant to Dr. C. R. Joy, then Executive Director of the U.S.C. Dr. Joy asked his new assistant to work in his spare time on a symbol for the Committee. The Flaming Chalice that now identifies the U.S.C. was the result of this request and it was given to the Committee by the artist in appreciation for the humanitarian work that the Committee is engaged in.
>
> When Hans Deutsch was threatened with imprisonment in Portugal in June, 1941, the U.S.C. assisted him in escaping to the U.S. where he now resides as John H. Derrick.
>
> The symbol represents a chalice with a flame burning the holy oil of helpfulness and sacrifice, spreading warmth and light and hope.

If I may, with due reverence, adapt a prayer in our service book, I can perhaps venture to hope that those who are perplexed by the mysteries of the symbol or overshadowed with doubt may draw some comfort from the above revelation, which seems to indicate that the original artist designed it in 1941 to represent something more like humanitarianism than religious faith. We are still left to ponder on the subsequent meanings given to the symbol. The Burning Bush of our Irish brethren, if perhaps more fussy in design, seems possibly more patient of uniform interpretation.

I am very glad indeed to be able to contribute now a further note on the subject of Unitarian ministers who are also Justices of the Peace. Besides the Rev. J. R. Sturges recently mentioned, we have at least one other in the person of that indefatigable, non-subscribing Presbyterian Christian, Dr. A. L. Agnew, minister of All Souls' Church, Belfast. I grieve very much at my failure to remember Dr. Agnew, who besides being a J.P. is also an Officer of the Most Excellent Order of the British Empire, as well as a Doctor of Divinity of Tufts University, U.S.A. Compared with ministers of Dr. Agnew's generation, people like me feel very small fry indeed! He is distinctive too in another field in which I had recently suggested that Mr. Sturges might be unique. He was in Russia for two months as long ago as 1935.

A proper Justice of the Peace, I once read somewhere that the first dissenting minister to achieve that distinction was the Rev. John Collins, who was our minister in Wiltshire

1833-63. A scholarly and much loved minister he retired into private life at the age of 51 and settled in Evesham, for which district he became a J.P., though I have no record of whether he preserved his ministerial title. I am sure there must have been plenty of other ministers who were members of the Bench in their time, but to forestall corrective notes—which nevertheless I am always glad to receive—I hasten to add that I was mainly concerned in my original reference with Unitarian ministers who can still claim the increasingly rare distinction of being alive!

IT OCCURRED TO ME

By Muriel Hilton

IT is bad enough to witness the unceasing activity of the majority of folk today, but far worse to meet and to speak with those, who wearing an invisible cloak of self-righteousness, fix one with a wintry eye and say, "I'm never idle for a moment," or "I must have something to do. I can't sit with my hands idle," and so on. Once I felt a sense of guilt—that was a long while ago. Now I count it one of the pleasures of life—just to do nothing!

We all do far too much, stuffing the day with so much that we live on a merry-go-round, only dropping off from sheer exhaustion. We are too busy to live.

Perhaps this mood has been engendered by a re-reading of Lao-Tse, who knew so much about the conquering power of stillness, of finding the primordial essence in contemplation. Reading "The Secret of the Golden Flower" of the centre of contemplation, I was reminded of those words of Charles Morgan's where he speaks of the inner stillness "the stilling of the soul within the activities of the mind and body so that it might be still as the axis of a revolving wheel is still."

Could not women who by their very nature should be receptive, "non-active", lead the western world back to sanity, where there could be a rhythm between contemplation and action, between solitude and communion, the outward streaming activity and the backward flowing movement? Women today, many of them are doing two jobs; and I am full of admiration for them; but even so, all this action without some balance of time to draw the self together, can make the spirit dry and sterile.

"There is nothing in all the world so like God as stillness" and there is no greater need today than people who knowing how to be still as the "axis of a revolving wheel is still" give a sense of security and peace in a disintegrated world.

Correspondence

Letters should be addressed to the Editor, "The Inquirer", 14 Gordon Square, London, W.C.1. They should not in general exceed three to four hundred words in length.

Not One Reply!

Sir: As President of the Sunday School Association, I have, of course, been grateful for the letters in defence of Unitarian Sunday Schools in reply to the Rev. C. H. Barker's challenge. I regret, however, that no opponent of Sunday Schools has come into the open.

My guess is that there are three main reasons why some Unitarians oppose Sunday Schools:—

1. They hesitate to teach children any religious faith, and consider this "indoctrination".
2. They suspect that many of our Sunday School teachers are not "real Unitarians" and that they teach orthodox beliefs.
3. Because many Sunday School children do not become church members, they consider Sunday Schools a waste of time, money and energy.

Some of our opponents, but not all, have no objection to children's church or junior congregation.

Before this correspondence sinks into oblivion, may we hear from Unitarians who oppose Sunday Schools on principle?

Yours, Joyce Hankinson.

Birmingham.

"Backward together"

Sir: I wonder if any useful purpose is served by the cynical contribution of Rosemary and Jeremy Goring in your issue of 19th March.

I appreciate they have exaggerated to strengthen their argument; which I suggest is based on a fallacy, and quite opposed to my experience as a "newcomer". Some 70 years ago I "blew in off the streets" to one of our old Sussex Churches. I was neither ignored or overwhelmed," but was given a quiet friendly hand-shake. I decided to go again and continued to do so.

My work and other circumstances took me to other parts of Sussex, Surrey, Kent, and London. In the course of years I was a "newcomer" at nine or ten different Unitarian Churches; later, on going to New Zealand.

I found the one Unitarian Church functioning there. Returning to England, the Churches I have visited as a "newcomer" in East Anglia and the Midlands have all given me a similar happy experience.

In no instance was I introduced, but with one exception, I have always been given a friendly welcome, certainly never "ignored or overwhelmed".

Yours, W. J. Hood.

Norwich.

Television Training

Sir: Would you allow me the courtesy of your columns to make known the fact that the Churches Television Training Centre has stated that if in their future planning they can find a place for a course training ministers for T.V. work they will be prepared to consider a number of our ministers for a three-day mid-week course in 1961.

Any ministers who are interested should write to me. The Ministry Committee will consider every application and those who are selected will be informed as soon as the Training Centre asks for names.

It should be made quite clear that the holding of a course in 1961 is only a possibility, and that even if men are trained, there can be no guarantee that they can be accepted by either of the broadcasting authorities for either television or sound broadcasts.

Yours sincerely,
John Kielty.
Secretary.

Essex Hall,
1/6 Essex Street,
Strand, London, W.C.2.

SPEKE

AN OPEN LETTER TO EVERY UNITARIAN

Dear Member,

At the end of May, 1959, the Speke Congregation, with the support of the Councils of the General Assembly and the Liverpool District Missionary Association, launched an Appeal for £15,000 to build and equip a new Unitarian Church on the Speke Housing Estate, Liverpool. To date that Appeal has brought in nearly £3,000, which includes generous support from the G.A., and L.D.M.A., as well as from a number of individuals, Churches and District Societies, and we are heartened by a promise of £1,000 when the Fund reaches £10,000.

The purchase of the site from the Corporation is nearly completed and the contract includes a clause under which we must start building within twelve months. The Appeal Committee feel that they must have at least £12,000 before they could start building and we urgently plead with every member and Church to help us reach this target before the end of March, 1961. If we do not get the money in the next year the Speke project will have to be abandoned and the donations returned.

The Movement as a whole is greatly encouraged by the signs of growth and the number of enquiries being received in answer to our advertisements. Speke which will become even more important when it is a centre of Motor Manufacturing, is a place where there is a live nucleus and a good Sunday School—WE MUST NOT FAIL.

Please [send your donations, large and small, or your promises, to me at "CHAPELSTEAD", GATEACRE BROW, LIVERPOOL. Cheques, etc., should be made payable to "SPEKE UNITARIAN CHURCH".

THANK YOU FOR READING THIS AND IN ANTICIPATION OF YOUR SUPPORT.

Yours sincerely,
Stanley R. Barker.

Adst.

Agadir—Some Replies

(The following are a selection of replies received on the subject of Agadir.)

Sir: Does not the problem of suffering depend for its answer upon our conception of God? I, personally, cannot reasonably see God revealed in nature, so often "red in tooth and claw". Surely God's love is revealed in man's compassion towards man in the face of disaster, such as that suffered at Agadir. I believe that it is in our reaction to suffering, and our ability to benefit by our experiences, which is the true revelation of Divine Love.

Treasurer, Reading Church. Yours, Marjorie Easton.

Sir: The problems of suffering and of sin or evil, are very real because everybody experiences them at some time.

At the risk of being told my beliefs are not Unitarian in principle, and of being given some fearful theological label, may I be permitted to outline them?

We are all members of a family, with God as our Father, although we do quarrel amongst ourselves. The evils in the world are not of our Father's making, for He is a God of Love.

Suffering follows upon evil or sin, whether caused deliberately or without thought, and is shared by each member of the family. Fortunate are we not to bear this as a solitary burden.

Although our scientists know much, they do not know all. Agadir may be the fault of man, it may be due to his ignorance.

The forecasting of earthquakes may be perfected in the future; probably buildings in the earthquake belt will be suited to the district; the earthquake is as natural a phenomenon as rain, and should be so regarded and guarded against.

Rossendale, Lancs. Yours, Leslie Procter.

Sir: There is no complete reply to the problem of why a loving and omnipotent God permits catastrophes like Agadir and indeed the endless and unmerited suffering in all the world. Since we cannot solve such problems we must try to live with them, as De Gaulle said when questioned about Algeria. It is amazing what many can endure without losing faith in God and indeed many have gained through pain an understanding, which otherwise had never reached them.

As for the movements of underwater rocks, which probably caused the devastation of Agadir, the earth crust doubtless obeying the physical laws laid down by the creator himself and God does not break his own laws. Our belief in the reign of law in both physical and spiritual things underlies for many of us our faith in God. In this world we see only in a glass darkly.

Rotherham. Isabel C. Holt.

Liberal Theology

Sir: It is pleasant to hear of somebody thinking about the formative courses of Unitarian thought, even when the approach is as critical as Mr. Wardle's.

His charge on this occasion was that liberal theology took "natural law" as its "sanctity", and that this turned out to be all too "shakey". It seemed to me that he was using the term "natural law" incorrectly, and that a good deal of confusion was likely. From his reply I see that this was the case.

Natural law is expounded in two contexts, one religious and the other scientific. In the religious context, which I thought would be Mr. Wardle's reference, natural law denotes that elementary and universal standard of morality which all men can be expected to understand independently of any special supernatural revelation. The traditional church took over the idea from the Stoics, and it still appears, in vigorous assertions, in Papal Encyclicals. Natural law is the general notion of right and duty which all men have as natural creatures in God's creation.

I do not know that this can be said to have been the "sanctity" of Unitarians. But if it had been it would be nothing to be ashamed of, for this idea is the pre-supposition which underlies all our hopes of a healthy community and international society.

Some other matters put forward by Mr. Wardle are suspicious. It is news to me that Unitarians were ever Hegelian. Few had the mental equipment to cope with Hegel, but Martineau had and did, and he rejected the system. I had the impression that Schleiermacher was our favourite German thinker, whose influence was not an unmixed good. Herbert Spencer is only known to me in the literature of Unitarianism as the subject of reproof. T. H. Huxley, had he been alive, would not likely have recommended Pringle-Pattison since he was not a liberal in theology, or in anything else. Russell Wallace was the liberal-minded evolutionist. Huxley was agnostic-liberalism.

As to the Unitarian suspicion of evolution, its effect was of several sorts, each intelligent and intelligible. Some Unitarians laid the handbrake to evolution as a good idea but defective. Others, accepting it, thought it would add difficulties to the simple faith in the good God. A number received it as a more meaningful version of origins than Genesis. It was also seen, what is not yet generally grasped, that the doctrine of original sin was turned upside down. The soberest comment was that the basic religious questions were left "exactly as they were". I do not think there are many misjudgments here.

Mr. Wardle's phrases about natural and supernatural revelation leave the impression that liberal theologians invented *natural religion*. It is worth while to observe that that is not so. That God, "the Fountain of Existence", manifests Himself to man "by the Light of Nature" and without supernatural revelation is a principle set up by St. Paul, by the Westminster Confession and the Catholic canons. The orthodox, while insisting on the substantial basis of natural religion, claim that special revelation is the necessary superstructure to it. For our part we insist on the same as regards natural religion, but claim that anything in special revelation which we feel bound to accept, we do so, not because it is supernatural, but because it recommends itself to our reason and conscience. What about meditating this *substantiality* of our beliefs for a change?

Aberdeen. Yours, Wallace Tavener.

Pulpits Vacant

The following pulpits are at present vacant and any minister desiring to have information concerning them should write direct to the Secretary of the General Assembly and *not* to the church concerned.

Altrincham, Bournemouth, Bury: Chesham and Rawtenstall, Kendal, Leicester: Great Meeting, Padiham, Southport, Stockport, Todmorden. Wales: Aberdare, Cefn Coed. Scotland: Glasgow.

We Adopted Children of Mixed Race

OUR first son, who was born to us, comes from Scottish, English German and American stock. Our second son, aged 2½, is from English, West Indian and Spanish stock, and our daughter, 1½, from English and African stock.

All three are normal, bright, healthy, lovable youngsters. They all have the same needs, they laugh or cry at the same things, and all need as much love as we can give them. There is no basic difference between them. Outwardly, there is a slight difference. The two little ones have darker skins, and our daughter's hair is a mass of fuzzy curls. Our son's eyes have an Oriental appearance, giving him an impish look that goes well with his character! Small differences really compared to the basic similarities, and yet because of such differences there are hundreds of children in Montreal, and throughout Canada, who are denied the most important and necessary things in a child's life. Vital things, like parents of their own, a home, family love, and security.

There are children now in the care of adoption agencies, of many mixed races, partly Negro, Japanese, Chinese, Indian, or North American Indian, to name a few. All are looking for homes, either by adoption, or with foster parents.

When we decided to adopt children who were part Negro, we asked ourselves many questions. What problems might arise? How would our families react? Would it affect our first son in any way? We could answer none of these questions well, and we won't be able to answer all of them until our children are grown up. But every family has problems, and when ours occur, we will meet them together.

Cynthia Cowan

(From the "News Letter" of the Lakeshore Unitarian Church, Montreal, Canada.)

CHARITY OF TIMOTHY BEAN

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(Hon. Secretary of The Widows' Fund, the Committee of which comprises the Trustees of the Charity.)

THE CALENDAR OF THE CHURCHES

SUNDAY, APRIL 3, 1960

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Death

Young.—On March 22nd, at the Herts and Essex Hospital, Mary Isobel (Mollie) Young, of 34 Hallingbury Road, Bishop's Stortford.

DUPLICATING, Shorthand, Typing, Translating. Mabel Eyles, 10, Beaconsfield Road, London, N.11. ENT 3324.

THE INQUIRER

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THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF UNITARIAN AND FREE CHRISTIAN CHURCHES

Annual Meetings
Conway Hall and Essex Hall, London
(except where otherwise stated)

Tuesday, April 19th to Friday, April 22nd

OUTLINE OF CHIEF EVENTS

TUESDAY, APRIL 19

2.30 P.M. SUNDAY SCHOOL ASSOCIATION ANNUAL MEETING (Essex Hall).
4.30 P.M. INFORMAL RECEPTION (Essex Church).
5.00 P.M. HISTORICAL SOCIETY (Essex Church).
7.00 P.M. ANNIVERSARY SERVICE (Essex Church).
Preacher: DR. DANA McLEAN GREELEY—
President of the American Unitarian Association.

WEDNESDAY, APRIL 20

10.00 A.M. PRESIDENTIAL ADDRESS AND ANNUAL BUSINESS MEETING (Conway Hall).
1.45 P.M. ANNUAL BUSINESS MEETING CONTINUED.
5.00 P.M. PEACE FELLOWSHIP (Essex Hall).
5.00 P.M. NATIONAL UNITARIAN FELLOWSHIP (Essex Hall).
7.30 P.M. MEETING ON PUBLIC QUESTIONS (Conway HALL).
Chairman: THE PRESIDENT.

THURSDAY, APRIL 21

10.00 A.M. COMMUNION SERVICE (Essex Hall).
Presider: REV. A. H. BIRTLES, B.A.

11.15 A.M. ESSEX HALL LECTURE (Essex Hall).
"Towards a New Theology".
REV. S. P. WHITEHOUSE, M.A., B.Litt.
2.00 P.M. SECTIONAL MEETINGS.
Women's League (Conway Hall).
Ministers (Essex Hall).
Lay Preachers' and Men's League (Essex Hall).
4.30 P.M. SOCIAL SERVICE DEPARTMENT (Essex Hall).
4.30 P.M. TEMPERANCE SOCIETY (Essex Hall).
7.30 P.M. YOUTH MEETING (Essex Hall).
"Morality".
Rev. A. H. Birtles interviewed by D. Milne and M. James.
7.30 P.M. WELSH SPEAKING UNITARIANS (Essex Hall).

FRIDAY, APRIL 22

10.00 A.M. CONFERENCE (Essex Hall).
"Revival of Liberal Religion all over the World".
Chairman: MISS MARGARET STEVENSON.
Speakers: DR. GREELEY.
REV. H. S. CARTER, M.A.
12 NOON CLOSING ADDRESS (Essex Hall).
REV. J. M. THOMAS, M.A.

RESOLUTIONS AT THE ANNUAL BUSINESS MEETING

In addition to routine resolutions, the following will appear on the Agenda. Any minister or delegate desiring to put forward an amendment should send it without delay to the Secretary in writing with the name of the Seconder.

Golders Green Church, Resolution

STATEMENTS ON PUBLIC MATTERS: "That whereas in these momentous times great issues develop rapidly and whereas the Unitarian voice should be heard as each new situation is faced, this Annual Meeting etc. requests the Council to find means of making public statements on behalf of the Assembly as such situation arises."

Bowdon Church, Cotton, Resolution

"The General Assembly and all other District Associations should consider ways and means of assisting their ministers to build up congregations instead of wasting the time of the Assembly on resolutions which are the proper concern of other national bodies."

JOHN ELTY, *Secretary*
Essex Hall, Essex Street, London, W.C.2.

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